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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 001773

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FOR AF/E AND NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRS](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#) [YE](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SALEH ON SOMALIA'S ISLAMIC COURTS: LET'S  
WORK TOGETHER

REF: A. SECSTATE 93874

[1](#)B. SANAA 212 (NOTAL)

[1](#)C. SANAA 956 (NOTAL)

[1](#)D. SANAA 1260

Classified By: DCM NABEEL KHOURY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: President Saleh and his Foreign Minister are urging dialogue between the USG and factions of the Islamic Courts not aligned with Al-Qaeda. The Courts are now a "fact on the ground" and we must seek to influence them now; if we wait until they take over Baidoa, we will have very little leverage left. While Yemen is interested in using its "moderating influence" to mediate between the Courts and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Yemen will not hesitate to "strike," according to Saleh, if the Courts set up a Taliban-like government in Somalia. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) During a meeting with Ambassador and DCM on June 15, President Saleh said that "none of us are happy" about the Islamic Courts' takeover of Mogadishu and Jowhar, but "they are now a factor on the ground and we must deal with them." Once the Courts take Baidoa, Saleh opined, "everything else will fall into their hands," and they will be less flexible in dealing with the international community.

[1](#)3. (C) The Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG) is continuing its mediation efforts between the TFG and the Courts, exerting a "moderating influence," according to Saleh. He urged the United States to work with the ROYG in this regard in order to establish a dialogue with non-AQ affiliated members of the Islamic Courts.

[1](#)4. (C) Saleh mentioned that he had sent a representative to Mogadishu to talk with the Courts' leadership, and his government is in contact with Yemen-based Somalis who are associated with the Courts. These contacts include Abdulkarim Salid, Hassan Tahir, Yusuf Da'an, and Abu Bakr al-'Addani.

[1](#)5. (C) The President also said he wanted to be clear that the ROYG in no way supports the establishment of a

Taliban-like regime in Somalia. If the Courts take Baidoa and form an extremist regime, he said, Yemen will "strike them." (NOTE: Saleh is probably referring to the provision of weapons at concessional prices to other Somali groups not aligned with the Courts in the event an extremist regime is put in place.)

¶16. (C) Separately, in several recent meetings, FM Abu Bakr al-Qirbi also stressed the importance of a U.S.-Yemeni dialogue on Somalia. He suggested the Yemen be made part of the Somalia Contact Group, at least as an observer (ref A). Qirbi urged the USG "not to equate every islamic group with terrorism," and engage those members of the Islamic Courts who are not affiliated with al-Qaeda. Perhaps the one advantage to the Islamic Courts' takeover of Mogadishu, Qirbi suggested, was that they are focused on bringing peace and stability to the capital -- a possible topic for the beginning of discussions with the USG and other international actors.

¶17. (C) COMMENT: Post agrees that the USG should engage more closely with Yemen on Somalia. To the extent it is possible, we should allow Yemen observer status at Contact Group meetings and consider exchanging views with them bilaterally. It is in Yemen's interest to help bring some measure of stability to Somalia, and we should engage the Yemenis when possible to use their influence with Somali leaders to further our common policy objectives there.  
Krajeski